(Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 already provide for reserving mineral bearing areas in favour of Central/State public sector companies for undertaking prospecting or mining operations.

Allocation of iron ore mines

1600. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that huge iron ore blocks are allocated to a recent outfit in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a request from Vizag Steel Plant for allotment of mineral blocks is pending before Government;

(c) if so, the steps taken in this regard;

(d) the reasons for leaving a PSU high and dry in allocation of the iron ore blocks; and

(e) whether this policy would be instrumental in degrading the well established Vizag Steel Plant in near future?

THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) The State Governments grant mineral concessions and prior approval of the Central Government is required only in respect of minerals mentioned in the First Schedule to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 including grant of mineral concession for iron ore. Details of prior approvals accorded by the Central Government for grant of mineral concessions are available on the website of the Ministry of Mines (*www.mines.nic.in*).

(b) and (c) Two proposals for reservation of areas for undertaking mining operations for the mineral iron ore in the State of Orissa and Chhattisgarh in favour of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited/Visakhapatnam (RINL/VSP) have been received in the Ministry. State Governments of Orissa and Chhattisgarh have informed that the areas sought by RINL/VSP are not available for reservation.

(d) and (e) RINL/VSP have informed that a number of mining lease applications of the company for iron ore in the States of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are under consideration of the State Governments.

Financial disbursement to minorities

1601. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria, other than population, that have been used to classify the zones/areas for financial disbursements to minorities;

(b) the total number of areas identified therefor; till now; and

(c) the details of assistance provided, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A.R. ANTULAY): (a) to (c) No zone/area has been identified for financial disbursement to minorities. However, 90